Conclusion

The account of local governance in two countries - India and Iran presents interesting parallels and contrasts at the same time. Whereas the case of India is conventionally referred as a case of centralised federal structure, the Iran case is distinctly unitary and centralised. The two cases examined in the present study represent two different political systems. Despite the differences in the political systems and political culture, both the countries make provision for the institutions of local governance. The study organized into various chapters cumulatively argues that the institutions of local governance with well defined competence and functional responsibilities provide better possibility of citizen centric governance. The space of autonomy provided to the local government institution in terms of decision making and implementation at the local level can prove to be efficacious for development and efficient service delivery at the local level. But more than that, the institutions of local governance can initiate a process of participatory decision making and democracy at the local level. The participatory structures of local governance can lead to inclusion of all the groups and communities. This case is more evident from the experiences of India over the past few decades. But before arriving at this conclusion it would be more appropriate to recapitulate the arguments and points discussed at various places in previous chapters. The chapter - I made an attempt to grasp the major thrust of debate on the issue on the one hand and the comparative cases of local governance on the other. It emerged out of discussion that local governance has come to occupy a central place in the discourse on governance. It is one of the core issues of debate on governance across the polities. A
comparative mapping of debates and developments across the polities lead us to maintain that decentralization and local governance in not an alien issue even in the most centralised systems. There is greater degree of realisation that the centralized mode of governance creates distance between the government and people. The myth of efficiency attached to a centralized decision making is interrogated by the participatory urge of decision making and citizen centric mode of governance. The experiences suggest that the centralized mode of governance does not essentially ensure better governance and efficient delivery of services. On contrary, it may lead to creation of a regimented structure and inefficient bureaucratic structure. Even the top down approach of governance and service delivery may create a hiatus between the government and people. In fact, local governance structures are now much closer to the people, which are considered as a requisite principle of efficient governance and service. It is this reason that greater emphasis has been paid on the model of local governance in recent decades. The capacity of participatory structures of local government to bridge the gap between the people and state makes special appeal. This is endowed with inherent quality that can facilitate not only efficient governance and service delivery but also ensure greater degree of citizen participation in governance. In many cases local governance is proving to an instrument of inclusion and empowerment of disadvantaged groups.

Within the broader framework of governance local governance acquires additional significance as it emphasizes involvement and participation of the people at the local level. The autonomy to formulate policy and planning and implement them at the local level is more appropriately informed by the principle of subsidiarity. The principle of
subsidiarity is well recognized in the literature of decentralization which implies that a task must be performed by the structure at the appropriate level competent to perform the function, and it should be transferred to an upper level only in case the level below to it is not competent to perform or fulfill the task assigned to it. The subsidiarity principle of governance provides legitimacy to the model of local governance within a political system.

The perspectives related to local governance and the relationship between local governance and democracy, and local governance and inclusion as examined in chapter – I establish the position articulated above. It reiterates the argument that the structure of local governance could lead to better governance in terms of efficiency and service delivery. Evidences suggest that the empowered local governments could lead to greater degree of citizens’ participation in governance and development. Switzerland and UK are the two most important and notable cases representing two distinct political systems - Federal and Unitary respectively. Despite the differences in governance structures and orientation, these two cases of developed world make provision for empowered structure of local governance wherein citizen’s participation becomes important. Effective institutions of local governance can unfold/initiate and deepen democracy which can provide channel for inclusion. The case of India is undoubtedly important in this regard. The structures of local governance especially after the constitutional amendment of 73rd and 74th effecting local government have enabled space for citizen participation of governance on the one hand, and inclusion and empowerment of disadvantaged groups on the other.
Though constitutional status per se is not a guarantee of empowered local government, the constitutionally guaranteed autonomy and competence of local government can make difference to a larger extent. The Indian example is important in this regard. Though institutions of local governance for both rural and urban areas have been an integral dimension of Indian governance system for a quite long time, the constitutional status granted to them through 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments has far reaching implications.

The institutions of local governance are used as mechanisms of service delivery in most of the countries whether it is centralized- unitary system or decentralized -federal structure. In some of the cases it forms an important order of government. In federal systems local government generally constitutes a form of third order government. In few others, institutions of local governance are seen not merely as extension of the state structure and mechanism of service delivery at the local level but as institutions of participatory decision-making, forms of local democracy and inclusion of groups and communities. In the previous chapter we already mapped out the perspectives and issues involved in local governance both in centralized and decentralized governance structures. The comparative mapping of the institutions of local governance in previous chapter- on the parameters of their constitutional status, competence and responsibilities, fiscal capacity not only provided framework of positioning the institutions of local governance in distinctively two different systems of India and Iran but also established the argument that local governance cannot be effective unless the institutions are empowered with competence and autonomy.
Since local governance in Iran is integrally linked to its centralized governance structure of the country, a kind of hierarchical structures informs the institution of local governance in Iran. There is no essential dichotomy between rural and urban governance structures. All the institutions of local governance are controlled by the centralized structure of the government. The central government provides institutional structures for the administration of each village, division, city, municipality, and province. These are known as councils of the respective units. Since the concept of local governance in Iran comes from the centralised conception of state, there is hardly any space for local innovation steered by the participatory decision making of the people. As pointed earlier the local governance structures in Iran are hardly autonomous, the possibility of community involvement in governance process in real sense of the term is deficient. They can hardly be seen as the structures and institutions of inclusion. It is no doubt that the multilayered structures of centralised governance make provision of citizen’s participation in governance through the institutions of councils at various levels.

In contrast to the perspective of local governance in Iran, India represents a different case both in terms of orientation and structure of local governance. Local governance in India has not been merely as extension of the state but as integral part of village life. In fact village, caste and joint family system have been constitutive aspect of Indian life. In this frame, the local level institutions, extensively referred as Panchayat, have occupied a central place. In fact the institutions of local governance have existed in India from the very beginning in different forms and manifestations.

Since India had a long tradition of local governance institutions, any informed debate and perspective on local governance cannot simply undermine existence of the
institutions. This has been one of the main reasons that the debate on local governance has also formed a part of larger debate on governance and democracy in India. Gandhi was ardently in favour of a governance structure which could resemble an oceanic circle. He was not at all in favour of a pyramidal structure of governance. The idea of an ocean circle gets expression in the Gandhian vision of Gram Swaraj (village self government). The idea of Swaraj in the Gandhian philosophy is life in totality. Though the idea of village republic as a form of government has been strongly contested by Ambedkar, the value of the institutions of local governance has not been negated. The constitutional philosophy of India finds imprints of the Gandhian thinking on the issue. The provision of Article 40 of the constitution articulates the concern as a guiding principle. The debate on local governance in India in subsequent years has acknowledged the importance of institutions of local governance in variety of ways.

Governance of national capital city has its own dynamics and complexities. This is one of the major reasons that we find wide variations in the model of governance of national capital cities. It needs to be mentioned that the governance of national capital territory in a particular country depends on the context of the capital city. The political system of governance prevalent in a country; and social-cultural and economic complexion of the city have important bearing on governance of the national capital in particular and cities in general. As we have seen in the preceding chapters, especially in chapter-I, that the principle and practices of local governance have considerable variations across the political systems. We find systems of local governance in both the centralised and decentralised governance structures but the local governance structures in both the systems do not essentially enjoy the same amount of competence. Even within the
federal system the competence of the local government is not identical in terms of its constitutional status, power and responsibilities and financial competence. It is rightly argued out that there cannot be a uniform model of governance across the political systems. The broad principles may permeate the governance structures but not the whole of it. This is precisely the reason that one cannot be replicated in another.

Compared to other units and structures of governance, metropolis are more complicated, and due to their numerous and intricate dimensions, layers and levels, their management requires special tools, techniques, skills and knowledge. That is why today the words and terms such as local government, local democracy, urban management, municipality, and the city council or city parliament are being used extensively all over the world, and have entered the political literature. Now the governments are trying to create a balance in their relations with local governments for the benefit of the citizens.

Governance of National Capital in any country is informed by many factors. The most important task is to maintain the national character of the city on the one hand and preserve its distinctiveness on the other. The capital city of Delhi also necessitates reconciliation of its distinctive character, which the city has acquire over many centuries of its growth and development, with the cosmopolitan requirement of the national capital city loaded with new challenges. The governance of the national capital territory of Delhi reflects the concern outlined above. The governance of national capital territory of Delhi (NCT) is shared responsibility of the union, state and the local governments. The shared responsibility of the governments in this context implies certain responsibilities and competence of each of the governments. The local governance
structures in Delhi are loaded with the responsibilities of development and maintenance of the city to a larger extent. Service delivery to the people in the city is ensured and facilitated by the local governments. There are many overlapping areas wherein the state and the local governments are involved. The union government has its own jurisdiction over the governance of the city. Delhi is governed through three different local bodies having their own geographical demarcation and areas of operation. The MCD as the main institution of governance of the NCT of Delhi as it has jurisdiction over 94% of areas has not only emerged over the years as the mechanism of service delivery but also as participatory institution of local governance and inclusion. The deliberative wing of the MCD attempts to represent diverse views on issues of common concern. The mandatory provisions included in the Act of MCD ensure representation of women and other disadvantaged groups. This is one of the most important aspects of local governance that places the case of India distinct from Iran. In the chapter on local governance in Iran we do not find the parallel in this regard. Besides the general concern of empowered local governance structures for Iran, it is equally or even more important to think in terms of representing women in the local governmental structures.